

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM
RSA-IM-04-04
DATE: January 16, 2004

ADDRESSEES: STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (GENERAL)
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (BLIND)
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
REGIONAL REHABILITATION CONTINUING EDUCATION
PROGRAMS
AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
PROGRAMS
PROJECTS WITH INDUSTRY
CONSUMER ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS
RSA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

SUBJECT: Announcement of the Rehabilitation Services Administration's 2004
National Employment Conference

CONTENT: The purpose of this Information Memorandum is to provide details
regarding the Rehabilitation Services Administration's (RSA's) 2004
National Employment Conference, "Employment and DisAbility
2004: The VR – Business Partnership." This conference is the fifth
in a series that began in 1996. It will take place on August 16-18,
2004, at the J.W. Marriott Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue in
Washington, DC. Joining RSA in co-sponsoring this year's event
are the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
(CSAVR), the National Organization of Rehabilitation Partners
(NORP) and the George Washington University Regional
Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (GWU/RRCEP).

The 2004 national event represents a significant departure from
previous conferences. It will target the infrastructure of the State
vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency, especially the leadership and
professional staff responsible for creating and maintaining employer
development, business relations and large-scale job placement.

A blue-ribbon panel appointed by the RSA Commissioner has
crafted and articulated the conference purpose as follows:

“Employment and DisAbility 2004: The VR – Business Partnership” will bring business together with public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) leaders and specialists in the areas of employer development, business relations and job placement. Through interactive training and focused planning sessions with employers, conferees will develop strategies to enhance high quality employment and career opportunities for individuals with disabilities through engaging employers to draw upon this largely untapped resource to meet their employment needs. The conference will focus on the strategic development of VR's national network that provides qualified job candidates and employment services to business.

At this time, we can provide sufficient preliminary details about the conference program that will facilitate your commitment to attend and to actively participate. General sessions will fall into two broad categories. Some sessions will follow the classical information-sharing format that this conference has highlighted since 1996. Such sessions will allow conferees to learn from employers who have productive relationships with VR agencies. Other general sessions will have an interactive format to allow participants to develop a strategic direction for the expansion of VR's nationwide efforts at employer development. These sessions will require the presence and participation of those within the State VR agencies empowered to provide background on current practice and to make commitments for their agency regarding new directions in strategic planning.

RSA plans to provide one training scholarship per State VR agency, which will fund travel, lodging, and the registration fee for a participant. For all other conference participants, a registration fee of \$195 has been established.

Watch your mail for this year's call for presenters. We look forward to hearing from those agencies that have effective working relationships with employers.

I hope that you will reserve the dates of August 16-18, 2004 on your calendar. Your active participation along with that of your employer development specialist is crucial to the continued success of initiatives that assure high-quality employment for eligible individuals with disabilities.

If you have comments that you want to share with us or need additional information about the 2004 conference at this time, please contact Jenn Rigger on my staff at 202-260-2179 or jenn.rigger@ed.gov.

Joanne Wilson
Commissioner

cc: COUNCIL OF STATE ADMINISTRATORS OF
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF REHABILITATION
PARTNERS